United Nations CEDAW/C/PRY/CO/7

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
22 November 2017

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Paraguay*

1. The Committee considered the seventh periodic report of Paraguay (CEDAW/C/PRY/7) at its 1536th and 1537th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1536 and CEDAW/C/SR.1537), held on 26 October 2017. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/PRY/Q/7 and the responses of Paraguay are contained in CEDAW/C/PRY/Q/7/Add.1.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its seventh periodic report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report (CEDAW/C/PRY/CO/6/Add.1) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group, as well as the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its high-level delegation, which was headed by the Minister of Women of Paraguay, Ana María Baiardi, and included the Minister of the Supreme Court, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of the High Court for Electoral Justice, the Minister of the Secretariat for Social Action, the Minister of the General Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, representatives of the Ministry of Women, the Ministry of Public Defence, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Well-being, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the National Police, the Agricultural Loans Facility and the Permanent Mission of Paraguay to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2011 of the State party's sixth periodic report (CEDAW/C/PAR/6) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-eighth session (23 October–17 November 2017).

17-20180 (E) 080118

Please recycle

(a) Act No. 5777 on the comprehensive protection of women from all forms of violence, in 2016;

(b) Act No. 5407 on domestic work, improving the protection of the rights of women domestic workers, in 2015;

(c) Act No. 5446 on public policies for rural women, safeguarding and promoting the economic, social, political and cultural rights of rural women, in 2015;

(d) Act No. 5344 establishing maternity leave for women in elected positions, in 2014;

(e) Act No. 4788 against trafficking in persons, in 2012;

(f) Act No. 4675 raising the National Women's Secretariat to the level of Ministry of Women's Affairs, in 2012.

5. The Committee welcomes the commitment of the State party to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and efforts made to establish a new mechanism to reach these objectives. It recalls the importance of indicator 5.1.1 and commends the State party on its positive efforts to implement sustainable development policies. The Committee also welcomes efforts made to improve the institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption of the following:

(a) Three-year plan for the social and political participation of women, covering the period 2016–2018, in 2015;

(b) National plan for the prevention of, care in relation to, protection from and monitoring of violence against women, in 2015;

(c) Paraguay 2030 national development plan, providing equal opportunities for women and men as a cross-cutting issue and with the specific objective of reducing extreme poverty, in 2014.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), of the International Labour Organization, in 2013.

C. Parliament

7. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites the parliament, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting period under the Convention.**

D. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Regression in the promotion of gender equality

8. The Committee is concerned about anti-gender movements seeking to exclude reference to gender from the political, educational and social discourse in the State party. It is also concerned about the ban by the Ministry of Education and Science on all dissemination and use of educational materials referring to "gender theory" and/or

"gender ideology", under Ministry decision No. 29664, and at the complete absence of the term "gender" from the Act on the comprehensive protection of women from all forms of violence. The Committee is further concerned at the bill on the protection of the family, which includes proposals that could lead to a setback reinforcing gender-based stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family. It is also concerned at the proposal to create a ministry of family, which could interfere with the mandate of the Ministry of Women and the resources allocated thereto. The Committee considers that the State party is facing a backlash on women's rights in legislation and political and daily life that may undermine achievements made in recent years in the advancement of gender equality.

9. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take measures to combat the attacks against gender equality in the public discourse and repeal decision No. 29664 of the Ministry of Education and Science;**

(b) **Expand capacity-building on gender equality for government officials, parliamentarians, leaders of political parties and of religious movements and public and private media actors;**

(c) **Ensure sufficient consultation and collaboration with a broad base of civil society representatives when drafting legislation, policies and programmes with regard to the elimination of gender discrimination and the promotion of gender equality.**

Legal and institutional framework

10. The Committee remains concerned at delays in the adoption of several pieces of legislation, including the anti-discrimination bill. It is also concerned at the insufficient implementation of the provisions of existing legislation and that this legislative gap may result in a lack of specific measures for the realization of the rights of women in the State party, especially those who face intersecting forms of discrimination.

11. **The Committee, recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/PRY/CO/6, para. 13), recommends that the State party expedite the adoption of the bill prohibiting all forms of discrimination, which should include a definition of discrimination, in line with article 1 of the Convention, cover direct and indirect discrimination and discrimination in the public and private spheres and recognize intersecting forms of discrimination, including discrimination against lesbian, bisexual and transsexual women and intersex persons, in accordance with the recommendations that enjoyed the support of the State party in the second cycle of the universal periodic review (see A/HRC/32/9, paras. 102.38 and 102.52–102.56). The Committee further recommends that the State party comprehensively review its legislation to eliminate all discriminatory provisions.**

Access to justice

12. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to decentralize the judiciary and to create support services, including through houses of justice and the development of a legal guide accessible on mobile phones, in order to improve access to justice for disadvantaged groups. It is concerned, however, that alleged corruption within the judiciary is impeding women's access to justice and creating a lack of trust among women in the State party in the police and the judiciary.

13. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the judicial system, including by:**

(a) **Fostering the professionalism, independence and accountability of judges, prosecutors and police officers, among others, in selection, promotion and dismissal procedures, reinforcing investigation and prosecution procedures and guaranteeing punishment in cases of corruption within the judiciary, in order to restore women's trust in the judicial system;**

(b) **Accelerating legislative action to ensure the availability of adequate financial, technical and specialized human resources to handle cases in a timely, gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory and competent manner and expanding the reach of houses of justice, including by increasing their number;**

(c) **Providing systematic capacity-building to judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers and other law enforcement officials on the protocols adopted to improve access to justice for specific groups, as well as training on women's rights, in particular the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations and its jurisprudence under the Optional Protocol.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

14. The Committee welcomes the change of the status of the Secretariat for Women to the ministerial level and the formulation by the State party of municipal public policies concerning gender equality. Nevertheless, it notes with concern that:

(a) The human, technical and financial resources allocated for the implementation of the evolving responsibilities of the Ministry of Women, and to allow for its representation in all regions of the State party, are insufficient;

(b) The budget allocated to the third national equal opportunities plan is insufficient for its effective implementation;

(c) The Ombudsman's Office is not in conformity with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and its scope is limited with regard to considering and making recommendations on complaints submitted by women alleging violations of their human right to gender equality.

15. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Give priority to the mandate of the Ministry of Women and substantially increase the human, technical and financial resources allocated thereto, allowing it to effectively carry out its mandate to monitor the situation of women, implement policies and legislation relating to gender equality in all administrative units of the State party and ensure their effective coordination;**

(b) **Ensure the allocation of a separate and sufficient budget for the effective implementation of the third national equal opportunities plan and for the monitoring and evaluation of its impact;**

(c) **Ensure that the Ombudsman's Office is in full compliance with the Paris Principles and allocate the human, technical and financial resources necessary to fulfil its mandate, which includes the elimination of all forms and grounds of discrimination.**

Temporary special measures

16. The Committee welcomes the adoption of legislation and policies for the promotion of rural women and women with disabilities. It is concerned, however, at the restricted use of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating substantive equality between women and men, especially in areas of life in which women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention.

17. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/PRY/CO/6, para. 17) that the State party take further steps to expand the use of temporary special measures and their wider application, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, as part of a necessary strategy to accelerate the achievement of women's substantive equality, in particular for groups of women facing intersecting forms of discrimination, such as indigenous women, women of African descent and rural women, in all areas of life in which they are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as in the health, education and employment sectors.**

Discriminatory stereotypes

18. The Committee welcomes initiatives taken by the State party to raise the awareness of State media about gender-sensitive communication and to provide training for the communication directorates of State institutions. It is nevertheless concerned at the persistence of discriminatory stereotypes in this regard and at intersecting forms of discrimination against women based on their sex, ethnicity, disability and marital status, as well as against lesbian, bisexual and transsexual women and intersex persons. It is concerned that these stereotypes underpin discrimination and gender-based violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence and femicide, as well as sexual abuse at school and in the workplace. The Committee is further concerned about the prevalence of discriminatory gender stereotypes in the media, in particular sexist portrayals of women.

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Put in place, without delay, a comprehensive strategy to raise public awareness of the concept of gender and eliminate patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that discriminate against women, which should include education and campaigns to raise awareness, targeting women and men at all levels of society, including community and religious leaders, and focus particularly on recognizing the value and dignity of women and empowering them to participate in decision-making processes in the community and in society at large, and should involve the engagement of civil society organizations and mass media organizations in the implementation of the strategy;**

(b) **Encourage the adoption of a code of conduct for advertising in public and private media, with a view to avoiding discriminatory stereotypes and media practices (CEDAW/C/PRY/CO/6, para. 19), and re-establish an entity monitoring the portrayal of women in public and private media;**

(c) **Expand gender-sensitive training to private media, encouraging them to convey positive images of women and their equal status with men in public and private life and to eliminate women's portrayal as sexual objects.**

Gender-based violence against women

20. The Committee welcomes the adoption of legislation on the comprehensive protection of women against all forms of violence, including femicide. It takes note of the establishment of an inter-institutional forum for prevention, response, follow-up and protection to women in situations of violence and of a single registry of public services provided to victims of gender-based violence. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The insufficient resources allocated for the implementation of the national plan for the prevention of, care in relation to, protection from and monitoring of violence against women;

(b) The underreporting of violence against women, partially owing to the limited availability of and access to victim protection services;

(c) That domestic violence against women reportedly accounts for half of the cases of gender-based violence in the State party;

(d) Hate speech and acts of violence against transsexual women, and the absence of investigations into and prosecutions and convictions of the perpetrators of such acts;

(e) The lack of a unified, coordinated and coherent system for collecting data on gender-based violence (CEDAW/C/PRY/CO/6, para. 20), as provided for in article 29 of the Act on integral protection of women against all forms of violence.

21. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of the national plan for the prevention of, care in relation to, protection from and monitoring of violence against women, as well as for its monitoring and evaluation;**

(b) **Facilitate reporting of violence against women, including by improving access to means of reporting violence and increasing the number of shelters for victims, providing them with protection, legal and medical assistance, psychosocial rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, especially in rural areas;**

(c) **Ensure that girls and women are protected from gender-based violence, especially in the domestic sphere, provide training on the regional protocol for gender-sensitive investigations into intrafamily offences involving violence against women, monitor its implementation and take into account the results of the survey on gender-based domestic violence in order to develop targeted actions to raise awareness about the serious nature of domestic violence and to encourage women to report domestic violence;**

(d) **Ensure that all allegations of sexual harassment and gender-based violence, including against transsexual women, are investigated, prosecuted and punished with sanctions commensurate with the gravity of the crime;**

(e) **Establish a unified, coordinated and coherent system for collecting data on gender-based violence (CEDAW/C/PRY/CO/6, para. 20) and allocate adequate resources for its functioning, ensuring that the system includes data disaggregated by sex, age and relationship between the victim and perpetrator, on femicide, violence against lesbian, bisexual and transsexual women and intersex persons, women who are victims of trafficking and women in**

prostitution, as well as on the number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions and on the sentences imposed on perpetrators of such acts.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

22. The Committee welcomes the adoption of legislation against trafficking in persons, a national plan to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and of a general protocol on responding to persons affected by trafficking. It remains concerned, however, that the State party continues to be a country of origin, transit and destination for internal and international trafficking in women and girls, and at:

(a) The absence of a gender and intercultural perspective in the strategy against trafficking in persons, despite the fact that all cases of trafficking in persons for purposes of sexual exploitation registered with the Public Prosecution Service over the past five years concerned women and despite the vulnerability of indigenous and migrant women to criminal trafficking networks;

(b) The absence of an inter-institutional mechanism coordinating the action against trafficking in persons, as provided for in article 44 of the Act against trafficking in persons, with a national fund to prevent trafficking in persons and provide care for victims, in line with article 50 of the Act;

(c) The lack of a mechanism for victim identification, in accordance with article 30 of the Act against trafficking in persons, to facilitate the early referral of women and girls who are victims of trafficking to protection and rehabilitation services, including temporary shelters;

(d) The lack of data on trafficking and on the sentences imposed on perpetrators of trafficking-related crimes.

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Revise the current national plan to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in order to address the specific vulnerability of women, and especially indigenous and migrant women, to trafficking;**

(b) **Expedite the establishment of a specialized inter-institutional mechanism coordinating the action against trafficking in persons (art. 44 of the Act against trafficking in persons) and allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources for it to address the particular vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking;**

(c) **Establish an effective victim identification mechanism to facilitate the referral of women and girls who are victims of trafficking to appropriate protection and rehabilitation services, including temporary shelters;**

(d) **Gather disaggregated statistical data regarding the incidence of both internal and cross-border trafficking, the number of criminal proceedings initiated and the sentences imposed on perpetrators of trafficking-related crimes and include such data in the next periodic report.**

24. The Committee notes with concern the absence of information on women in prostitution in the State party, as well as reports of police violence, extortion, arbitrary arrests and detention without warrants of women in prostitution. It is further concerned at the absence of specific services and programmes for women in prostitution, including exit programmes for women wishing to leave prostitution.

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party, without delay, carry out a study on the root causes and extent of prostitution and that it use the outcomes of the study to develop services and support programmes for women in prostitution and measures to protect them from exploitation and abuse by police officers and clients, as well as develop exit programmes and alternative income-generating opportunities for women wishing to leave prostitution.**

Participation in political and public life

26. The Committee notes the submission of a bill on democratic parity to the Senate, the initiatives taken under the three-year plan for the social and political participation of women and the training for women who are members of political parties. The Committee is concerned, however, about the delay in the adoption of the bill, and that, 20 years after the introduction of quotas for elections, the representation of women in the parliament and in other areas, including ministerial positions, remains low.

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the bill on democratic parity and its application to all legislative bodies and appointed positions in the Government and the public service;**

(b) **Implement activities for the general public to raise awareness of the importance of women's participation in decision-making, and step up targeted training and mentoring programmes on leadership and negotiation skills for current and potential women candidates and women holding public office.**

Women human rights defenders

28. The Committee is concerned at acts of intimidation and harassment against women human rights defenders, as well as against teachers, journalists, lawyers and members of non-governmental organizations working on women's rights, gender equality, violence against women and sexual violence. It is further concerned at reported abusive practices by security and law enforcement personnel against indigenous and rural women, such as the detention of women present at the Curuguaty massacre in 2012 in spite of the lack of proof of their effective involvement.

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in line with its voluntary commitments made during the second cycle of the universal periodic review (see A/HRC/32/9, paras. 102.115–102.120):**

(a) **Combat impunity by ensuring the timely, thorough and transparent investigation of all intimidation, harassment and attacks against women human rights defenders, teachers, journalists, lawyers and indigenous and rural women who become victims of human rights violations and abuses;**

(b) **Prosecute perpetrators of such acts, including State officials, and ensure that victims have access to effective redress;**

(c) **Expedite the adoption of the bill on freedom of expression, protection of journalists, members of the press and human rights defenders.**

Birth registration

30. The Committee acknowledges the efforts made by the State party to promote birth registration. It notes, however, that 30 per cent of newborns are not registered.

It is concerned that this may prevent unregistered girls from gaining access to basic services, such as health and education, and put them at risk of statelessness and trafficking.

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party accelerate efforts to reach universal birth registration, including through the use of modern technology to simplify procedures.**

Education

32. The Committee welcomes the introduction of non-formal literacy programmes for indigenous communities and non-formal vocational programmes allowing young people and adults to develop practical skills for specified occupations. It is concerned, however, at:

(a) The persistence of structural barriers to access to high-quality education for girls, in particular at the secondary and tertiary levels, owing to, among other things, inadequate budget allocations to the sector, which also result in a lack of school infrastructure, teaching materials and qualified teachers, especially in rural areas;

(b) Persistent disparities in literacy rates for women and men and the significant level of illiteracy among indigenous women and rural women;

(c) The lack of information provided by the State party on measures taken to encourage girls to participate in non-traditional fields of study and career paths, such as mathematics, informatics, technology and science.

33. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase budgetary allocations to education to allow for the revision of school infrastructure, especially in rural areas, and to improve the quality of education, including by ensuring that the expansion of enrolment is matched with the supply of essential and accessible teaching and learning facilities;**

(b) **Establish programmes specifically designed to eradicate illiteracy among rural women and indigenous women, as well as among women in urban environments, and adopt and implement targeted measures to accelerate the equal participation of indigenous girls and women at all levels of education;**

(c) **Design and implement a nationwide campaign to eliminate traditional stereotypes and structural barriers that might deter girls from enrolling in non-traditional areas of study and career paths, such as such as mathematics, informatics, technology, and science, including by providing scholarships specifically for girls.**

Employment

34. The Committee welcomes the State party's first survey on time utilization and the efforts made to adopt a bill criminalizing the practice of unpaid domestic child labour and establishing penalties for the worst forms of child labour, as well as legal measures taken to grant access for self-employed workers to social protection and pension funds. The Committee is concerned, however, at:

(a) The stark gender wage gap of 22.2 per cent and the fact that the legal minimum wage for domestic workers is 40 per cent lower than the minimum wage for other workers, which disproportionately affects women who account for the majority of domestic workers;

(b) Non-compliance with the legislation promoting and protecting maternity, especially with regard to maternity protection and inequitable distribution of domestic and care work between women and men, forcing many women to take low-income jobs in the informal sector;

(c) The persistence of domestic child labour, and the exposure of girls, through this practice, to employment conditions that hinder their full development, amount to labour exploitation and expose them to physical, psychological and sexual abuse;

(d) Testing for pregnancy and HIV in hiring procedures and women being exposed to inadequate working conditions, mainly in the *maquila* industry;

(e) The gender-blind nature of the legislation introducing a 5 per cent quota in the public sector for persons with disabilities which has led to the misperception that the quota is restrictive, representing a maximum number of positions for persons with disabilities, and the fact that men with disabilities tend to be employed in such positions rather than women with disabilities.

35. **The Committee, recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/PRY/CO/6, para. 29), recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Reduce the gender wage gap by regularly reviewing wages in sectors in which women are concentrated and establishing effective monitoring and regulatory mechanisms for employment and recruitment practices to ensure that the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is adhered to in all sectors, and ensure the same minimum wage for all workers, including domestic workers;**

(b) **Take targeted measures to improve access to formal employment for women, including managerial or decision-making positions, by, among other things, monitoring and enforcing the legislation promoting and protecting maternity and strengthening the incentives for men to exercise their right to parental leave, as well as expediting the adoption of the national care policy, providing sufficient and adequate childcare facilities and promoting the equal sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between men and women;**

(c) **Expedite the adoption of the bill criminalizing the practice of unpaid domestic child labour and monitor and eradicate this practice, including by raising awareness through the media and public education programmes on the situation of girls performing domestic work and on their rights;**

(d) **Prohibit and apply adequate sanctions for compulsory pregnancy and HIV testing in hiring procedures and strengthen labour inspection mechanisms to better monitor women's employment conditions, especially in the domestic sphere and in the growing *maquila* industry;**

(e) **Introduce temporary special measures, such as a specific quota for women with disabilities, to promote their inclusion in public and private employment.**

Health

36. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the current national sexual and reproductive health plan and the introduction of guidelines on the provision of comprehensive post-abortion services, requiring full confidentiality and medical secrecy for women who undergo an abortion. It also takes note of initiatives taken through the "Code Red" strategy to reduce maternal mortality and the distribution of

health and birth kits to family health units, which extend to rural and indigenous areas. It is concerned, however, at:

(a) Delays in the adoption of the bill on sexual, reproductive, maternal and perinatal health;

(b) Significant gaps between rural and urban areas in access to affordable and high-quality antenatal, maternity and postnatal services, resulting in high numbers of unassisted and unregistered births;

(c) High rates of maternal mortality, mainly owing to the resort to unsafe abortions and health professionals refusing to conduct therapeutic abortions and reporting women who seek abortion-related assistance to the police;

(d) The criminalization of abortion and the restrictive conditions under which abortion is legally available, i.e., only in cases of threat to the life of the woman, thus excluding other circumstances such as threats to her health, rape, incest and severe impairment of the foetus;

(e) The high rates of death resulting from female breast cancer and cervical cancer in the State party, which are among the highest in Latin America;

(f) Women in prostitution, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual women and intersex persons and women living with HIV/AIDS facing difficulties in gaining access to health services and facing discrimination and mistreatment by health-care personnel.

37. **The Committee recalls its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/PRY/CO/6, para. 31) and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the bill on sexual, reproductive, maternal and perinatal health;**

(b) **Take action to overcome the obstacles to the proper functioning of gynaecology and obstetric services that were identified in the study by the Ombudsman's Office, and ensure that rural and indigenous women have access to affordable and high-quality antenatal, maternity and postnatal services, including by increasing the number of family health units;**

(c) **Ensure the application of adopted guidelines regarding the obligation of confidentiality in the health-care system, including through training of health providers on those guidelines, and develop additional guidance for health professionals on the requirements and procedures for therapeutic abortions, in order to guarantee that women have effective access to reproductive health-care services, including abortion and post-abortion care;**

(d) **Remove punitive provisions imposed on women who undergo abortion, legalize abortion at least in cases of risk to the health of the woman, rape or incest and in cases of severe foetal impairment, and decriminalize it in all other cases;**

(e) **Strengthen the efforts to address the high rates of cervical and breast cancer by, among other things, improving prevention, early detection, treatment and psychological support for women and girls with cancer and by allocating adequate human and financial resources for that purpose;**

(f) **Ensure access to health services for all women and girls, including women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, women and girls with disabilities, women and girls in prostitution and lesbian, bisexual and transsexual women and**

intersex persons, and take measures to punish discriminatory treatment against them and address their stigmatization and social exclusion.

Economic empowerment of women

38. The Committee welcomes the training of vulnerable female heads of household on business planning by the National Labour Training System and the establishment of the Agricultural Loans Facility for the introduction of innovative loan services for women. It is concerned, however, at:

(a) The absence of a gender perspective in the national strategy for financial inclusion, limiting the impact of this strategy on women;

(b) Persisting barriers to equal access for women to financial credit, such as a lack of identity documents;

(c) The concentration of initiatives for the economic empowerment of women on their engagement in microenterprises, and at their limited outreach.

39. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Revise the national strategy for financial inclusion to incorporate a gender perspective;**

(b) **Increase access for women to financial credit through support measures for their registration and the issuance of birth certificates and identity documents;**

(c) **Expand the outreach of targeted measures, such as low-interest credit schemes, technical assistance and counselling, and promote women's entrepreneurial activities in small, medium and large businesses, in all regions of the State party, including in rural areas.**

Rural women and indigenous women

40. The Committee welcomes the creation of the National Organization of Indigenous Peoples, the census of indigenous communities in 2012 and the approval of the legislation on public policies regarding rural women. It is concerned, however, that rural women, including those in isolated communities which include indigenous women, continue to face intersecting forms of discrimination, and that they:

(a) Are disproportionately affected by poverty, especially in the Chaco region, and face barriers in the exercise of their rights regarding health care, education and employment opportunities in the formal sector, thus increasing their vulnerability to labour exploitation and trafficking;

(b) Have limited access to land titles, including to the land on which they work, resulting from the lack of identity documents;

(c) Are vulnerable to land acquisition, including of indigenous traditional lands, by agro-industrial and other business projects;

(d) Are particularly affected by the absence of adequate mechanisms to guarantee their prior consultation regarding alternative livelihoods and compensation in cases of land acquisition;

(e) Suffer the negative impacts of the misuse of agrotoxic products in agriculture.

41. **The Committee, in line with its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase the financial, human and technical resources allocated for the provision of health and education services in rural areas and for indigenous women, including in the Chaco region, and take targeted measures to achieve de facto equal opportunities for indigenous and rural women in the labour market;**

(b) **Take targeted measures to facilitate access for indigenous and rural women to land titles, including by facilitating their access to identity documents;**

(c) **Establish a legal framework to ensure that large-scale development projects, agro-industrial and other business projects are implemented only after a gender impact assessment has been conducted and there has been prior consultation of affected indigenous and rural women concerning alternative livelihoods and their adequate compensation;**

(d) **Implement the Committee's previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/PRY/CO/6, para. 33) to undertake a comprehensive study on the probable negative causes of the misuse of agrotoxic products in agriculture in order to implement the measures necessary to eradicate their impact on the health of women and their children.**

Adolescent girls

42. The Committee welcomes the adoption of a national adolescent health plan covering the period 2016–2021 and of legislation to combat harassment in public and private educational establishments. It also welcomes efforts to raise awareness of violence against women in educational settings, the consequent revision of school textbooks and plans to establish procedures for investigating cases of domestic or gender-based violence. However, the Committee is concerned at the negative effect on the development of adolescents, specifically on their physical and mental health, their education and their future opportunities for decent work, of the following:

(a) High pregnancy rates among girls aged 10–19 years and high rates of maternal mortality among girls aged 15–19 years, as a result of, among other things, unsafe abortions;

(b) High rates of sexual violence against adolescent girls, and the reported rise in forced early pregnancy, including through incest;

(c) The absence of data on the reasons why girls drop out of school, reported stigmatization of pregnant girls at school and the lack of childcare facilities and other support measures to facilitate the reintegration of young mothers into the education system.

43. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Prioritize the implementation of strategic area number 5 of the national adolescent health plan, strengthen initiatives to ensure that adolescents and young women and men are accurately informed about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, including on the use of modern forms of contraception, and reinforce measures to facilitate their access to affordable contraceptive methods and safe abortions;**

(b) **Expedite the establishment of procedures for the investigation of gender-based domestic violence against adolescent girls, provide specific mandatory training to law enforcement personnel and members of the judiciary,**

as well as to health, education and social work professionals on these procedures, as well as on the strict application of provisions to prosecute and adequately punish acts of sexual violence against adolescent girls, regularly monitor their application and apply adequate sanctions in case of non-compliance with such legislation;

(c) Collect data on the reasons why girls drop out of school, raise the awareness of pupils, as well as of education and health professionals, of the provisions of Act No. 4084 on the protection of pregnant pupils and enforce its application, provide adequate childcare facilities in educational settings on all levels and address negative stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes with regard to the sexuality of adolescents.

Women in detention

44. The Committee welcomes the use, since 2013, by the State party of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). Nevertheless, it notes with concern:

(a) The high number of women in pretrial detention, the length of pretrial detention and overcrowding of places where women are deprived of their liberty;

(b) Non-separation of pretrial detainees and convicted women inmates, and at their limited access to health-care services and to items of personal hygiene;

(c) Discrimination against lesbian women through the refusal of partner visits and against adolescent mothers who are denied the right to keep their children in their care;

(d) Reports of violence against women in detention and of abuse of transsexual detainees.

45. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Address overcrowding in places where women are deprived of liberty, including by limiting the use of preventive detention, applying alternative measures to detention and introducing a system to control the duration of preventive detention;

(b) Reinforce training on and monitor compliance with the Bangkok Rules, and improve the conditions in women's detention facilities in accordance with international standards, including by guaranteeing the separation of pretrial and convicted women detainees and ensuring the provision of adequate health services and personal hygiene items for women detainees;

(c) Guarantee partner visits and visits of family members for all women, including for adolescent mothers, lesbian women and transsexuals;

(d) Ensure that women are able to file reports about abusive conduct by guards and supervising staff in detention centres, including with respect to sexual violence, intimidation or harassment, that such reports are promptly, independently and impartially investigated and prosecuted and that perpetrators are adequately punished.

Marriage and family relations

46. The Committee takes note of the increase of the minimum age for marriage for girls and boys to 18 years. Nevertheless, it is concerned at:

(a) The remaining exceptions allowing marriage under 18 years of age, which are subject to authorization by parents, legal guardians or judicial authorities;

(b) The lack of awareness among women of the possibility of gaining access to financial support for DNA testing with regard to paternity claims, administrative barriers preventing them from availing themselves of such financial support and the limited financial resources allocated to the implementation of this support;

(c) The lack of inclusion of intangible assets, such as pension, insurance and work-related benefits, in the definition of property under the community property regime, which leads to the unequal division of property between men and women upon divorce, and this in the absence of mechanisms to compensate women for economic disparities between spouses.

47. **The Committee, recalling its general recommendation No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations and its general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take measures to eliminate exceptions to the minimum legal age of marriage for girls and boys and ensure that any such exceptions can be authorized only by a judicial authority and only with the prior, free and informed consent of the girls concerned;**

(b) **Raise awareness of Act No. 1914 granting financial support for paternity claims in case of a lack of financial means, remove administrative barriers to facilitate access for women to such financial support for paternity claims and allocate adequate financial resources for its implementation;**

(c) **Ensure that the concept of joint marital property extends to intangible property, including pension and insurance benefits and other career assets, and take further legal measures, as needed, to compensate women for their unequal share in unpaid work, including through post-separation spousal payments.**

Amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

48. **The Committee encourages the State party to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

49. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention.**

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

50. **The Committee calls for the realization of substantive gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

Dissemination

51. **The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official languages of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local),**

in particular to the Government, the ministries, the parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation

Follow-up to concluding observations

52. **The Committee requests that the State party provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 9 (a), 15 (a), 23 (b) and 35 (c) above.**

Preparation of the next report

53. **The Committee invites the State party to submit its eighth periodic report in November 2021. The report should be submitted on time and, in the event of delay, cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.**

54. **The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).**